

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE EYES ONLY

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State Dept. review
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ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE 211020Z MAR 70 VIA CAS CHANNELS

FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 562

TO THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY HENRY A KISSINGER

REF: WHS0010

1. I APPRECIATE RECEIPT OF YOUR MESSAGE. I AM ENCOURAGED BY REPORT OF YOUR TALK WITH MICHAEL, YUL, AND NESTOR, WHICH IT SEEMS TO ME MOVED THE SITUATION SOMEWHAT FURTHER AHEAD. I AWAIT YOUR MEMCON WITH INTEREST, WILL BE GIVING THOUGHT TO THE NEXT MEETING ON APRIL 4, AND WILL TRY TO FORWARD SOME SUGGESTIONS.

2. I MET WITH THIEU TODAY AND WENT OVER WITH HIM FULLY SUBSTANCE OF YOUR TALK AS OUTLINED IN YOUR MESSAGE. I EMPHASIZED ESPECIALLY A) WHAT WAS NEW OR DROPPED AND B) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TALKS WHICH APPEARED ON REVIEW OF THE SUBSTANCE.

3. THIEU EVINCE GREAT INTEREST IN MY PRESENTATION, ESPECIALLY IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE A CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE OTHER SIDE TOWARD WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR FORCES AND IN THEIR DROPPING OF THE PRG 10 POINTS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED A KEEN INTEREST IN THEIR STATEMENT THAT THEY WOULD "EXPOUND OUR POINT OF VIEW".

4. I INFORMED THIEU THAT YOU HAD SUGGESTED APRIL 18 AS THE DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING, BUT MICHAEL, YUL, AND NESTOR HAD SUGGESTED APRIL 4, WHICH INDICATED THAT AT THE LEAST THIS IS NOT A STALLING TACTIC.

5. I ADDED YOUR COMMENT THAT THEIR PURPOSE IS NOT YET CLEAR, AND MAY ONLY BEGIN TO EMERGE OVER THE NEXT FEW MEETINGS; THAT THEY HAVE KEPT OPEN OPTIONS OF SEEKING A SETTLEMENT OR ONLY RECONNOITERING OUR POSITION, BUT THAT IN THE LATTER CASE THEY HAVE GIVEN MORE THAN THEY GAINED.

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6. IN THE LIGHT OF THIEU'S COMMENTS, I SAID THAT I ASSUMED HE FELT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO EXPLORE THE SITUATION TO WHICH HE REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY AND POSITIVELY.

7. THIEU THEN BEGAN TO REFLECT ON THE DIRECTION AND PURPOSES OF NVN POLICY. HE FELT THAT THE RECENT SPEECHES OF LE DUAN AND OTHERS INDICATED THAT THE POLITBORO HAD REACHED A DECISION. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE RECALLED THAT YE HAD SAID LAST YEAR AT THE TIME OF HO'S DEATH THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO CONTINUE THE WAR AT THE SAME TEMPO, REVERT TO A PROTRACTED WAR OR REACH A DECISION FOR SUBSTANTIVE TALKS IN PARIS.

8. HE FELT THAT THEY HAD NOW MADE A DECISION TO REDUCE THE TEMPO OF THE WAR IN THE SOUTH AND TO PROLONG IT THROUGH GUERRILLA TACTICS; TO BUILD THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE SOUTH; AND TO RESTORE THE ECONOMY IN THE NORTH. THIS DOES NOT, HOWEVER, IN HIS VIEW RULE OUT THEIR TRYING TO MAKE SOME PROGRESS IN PARIS. IN THE MEANTIME, THEY WILL TRY TO SEE WHAT THEY CAN SECURE FROM US, WILL TRY TO PROBE TO FIND OUT WHAT WE WANT AND MAY LET US KNOW WHAT THEY WANT.

9. THIEU FELT THAT UNLESS THERE WAS SOME PROGRESS IN THE TALKS, THE OTHER SIDE WOULD INEVITABLY TRY TO STAGE A MAJOR OFFENSIVE BEFORE OUR ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER. THIS, HE SAID, WAS IN LINE WITH THEIR PHILOSOPHY, IT WAS WHAT HAPPENED AT DIEN-BIEN PHU DURING THE GENEVA TALKS. THEIR OBJECTIVES WOULD BE MUCH MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL THAN MILITARY, ATTEMPTING TO AFFECT U.S. AND FREE WORLD OPINION.

10. IF THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS, THEY MIGHT THEN ACCEPT IN PARIS WHAT THIEU REFERRED TO AS A "TEMPORARY" PEACE. IF THEY ARE UNSUCCESSFUL, AND THIEU EXPRESSED THE VIEW THEY WOULD NOT BE SUCCESSFUL, THEY MAY THEN TRY TO PROLONG THE WAR BUT AT A TEMPO WHICH COULD IN EFFECT RESULT IN A FADE AWAY. THIS DOES NOT MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT THEY MAY NOT FIND IT DESIRABLE AT SOME POINT IN THIS PROCESS TO COME TO AN AGREEMENT IN PARIS AND WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE THIS POSSIBILITY.

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